



The President's Daily Brief

February 4, 1975

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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ETHIOPIA

A heavy firefight broke out late last night in downtown Asmara following a quiet day. Some US military facilities were hit by small arms fire, but there were no casualties.

Yesterday, the police resumed responsibility for patrolling the city and almost all of the troops returned to their barracks. The army, in a radio broadcast, called for a return to normal and asked stores to reopen for business. These moves are a good indication that the government forces do not feel seriously threatened by the rebels. It is also a tacit admission that the intense firing in the city over the weekend was an overreaction by the armed forces to a limited rebel attack.

Despite the relative calm, shortages of water and electricity are creating a critical situation in the city. Our consul is planning to evacuate American dependents today and French nationals may join the exodus. He reports that he is under increasing pressure from local citizens demanding asylum or access to the consulate's limited water reserves. The commander of the Kagnev communications station has requested permission to evacuate all US personnel.

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USSR-SOMALIA

A Soviet construction project in Berbera, Somalia appears [redacted] to be a cruise missile handling and storage facility for the Soviet Indian Ocean naval contingent. The facility could also handle surface-to-air missiles or torpedoes. It is not suitable for ballistic missiles.

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The installation would be the first such Soviet facility of its kind known to exist outside the USSR. Construction began in the fall of 1973 and the facility could be operational by mid-1975.

Soviet forces currently operating in the Indian Ocean must rely on specialized missile facilities at naval bases in the USSR, although naval auxiliaries can resupply other weapons from their limited stocks. The installation at Berbera will increase the readiness of Soviet missile-equipped ships and submarines on station in the area and will permit these ships to remain for longer periods. Moreover, completion of the Berbera installation may lead to an increase in the number of missile-equipped units operating in the Indian Ocean.

The Soviets apparently have decided that the military advantages of having this missile handling installation outweigh the negative political backlash that is possible if the installation becomes public knowledge. The installation may be interpreted by conservative Arab and other littoral states as evidence of new Soviet designs in the Indian Ocean, and by others as evidence of the dangers involved in big-power naval rivalry in the ocean. Moscow may also get criticism regarding its "intentions" to control the approach to the Suez Canal, even though the installation has, in fact, no direct bearing on control of the straits.

On the Somali side, this expansion of the Soviet presence probably represents a weakening in the position of those members of the Supreme Revolutionary Council who have consistently opposed Somalia's close ties with the Soviet Union. Moreover, the Soviets have even more reason now to see

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that President Siad and the pro-Soviet members of the council maintain their control. An increase in Moscow's military aid may be the price.

Somalia's attempts to obtain financial aid from the Arab world could be endangered if these facilities become publicly known. Saudi Arabia and other conservative Arab states, which are concerned about Soviet intentions in the Middle East and Indian Ocean and want to reduce Soviet influence in these areas, may review their promises to provide the Somalis with over \$50 million in aid. Siad may hope that he can have it both ways.

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USSR-SYRIA

The USSR and Syria may be trying to apply pressure on Egypt to accept a deadline in its negotiations with Israel concerning the Sinai.

The communiqué marking the end of Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko's visit to Syria yesterday calls for the reconvening of the Geneva peace conference within a month. It may also, in the Soviet view, commit Damascus to forego bilateral negotiations with Israel concerning the Golan front in favor of the Geneva forum.

Other aspects of the visit seemed orchestrated for their impact on the Egyptians. Gromyko's banquet statement that the Russians "know how to evaluate real friendship" was an implicit slap at Egyptian President Sadat.

Although the Soviets reiterated their commitment to strengthen Syria's military capabilities, there was almost no mention of substantive assistance. Gromyko did no more than sign previously negotiated agreements on economic and scientific cooperation.

While in Damascus, Gromyko met with fedayeen leader Yasir Arafat and, in a banquet speech, made Moscow's first explicit call for a Palestinian "state." Previously, the Soviets had endorsed only a Palestinian "national home" or "statehood." The Soviet-Syrian communiqué, however, omits any reference to either Palestinian "statehood" or "state."

Gromyko met with Egyptian Foreign Minister Fahmi for three hours soon after his arrival in Cairo yesterday, where the two signed consular and economic planning agreements and the cultural protocol for this year. These three accords were negotiated some time ago. They had been left for signature by General Secretary Brezhnev before his scheduled visit to Cairo was postponed in late December.

Gromyko's first and possibly only session with President Sadat is set for this morning. The Egyptian press has played down their meeting, merely noting that Sadat would see Gromyko "before he leaves."

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CYPRUS

Greek Cypriot negotiator Clerides and Turkish Cypriot negotiator Denktash failed to break their impasse in a final meeting yesterday before the scheduled cutoff tomorrow of US military aid to Turkey. They are still at odds on the question of Nicosia airport and could not agree on a formula to allow some Greek Cypriot refugees to return home.

Clerides offered to drop the Greek Cypriot demand for a UN role in the airport's management if Denktash set aside Turkish Cypriot insistence that the airport be run by representatives of the guarantor powers--the UK, Greece, and Turkey. Greek Cypriots are concerned that once the Turkish government acquired such a role, it would seek to perpetuate it. Clerides suggested the airport could be operated by representatives of the two communities in proportion to their population. Denktash offered to consider Clerides' proposals but gave no immediate reply.

Denktash offered to allow up to 5,000 Greek Cypriots to return to their homes behind Turkish lines, but said that Turkish forces would not pull back. Clerides rejected the offer because of the small number of proposed returnees and because they would be settled behind Turkish lines where they might be harassed by Turkish forces. Greek Cypriots living within the Turkish sector have been under pressure from the Turks to move south.

In Athens, a close aide to Prime Minister Karamanlis told the US ambassador that the Prime Minister views the proposed meeting of the foreign ministers of Greece and Turkey with the US Secretary of State later this month as a "last chance" to break the deadlock on Cyprus. Karamanlis is under pressure from President Makarios to agree to internationalize the Cyprus issue if the intercommunal talks remain stalemated much longer. Makarios reportedly requested Athens' consent for such a course, late last month but was asked to delay for the time being.

In a press conference yesterday, Makarios said he was inclined to turn to another forum if the talks do not make some progress by the end of this month. He hinted that he may seek greater Soviet support and involvement in the Cyprus problem.

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NOTES

The Soviets have reportedly delivered military aircraft to Egypt for the first time since late 1973 in a shipment that arrived just prior to Foreign Minister Gromyko's discussions in Cairo.

A senior Egyptian official has told the US that a Soviet ship arrived at Alexandria Sunday carrying MIG-23 and MIG-21 aircraft, and anti-aircraft missiles. In fact [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] shipment is apparently the first installment on the arms promised the Egyptians during the visit of Foreign Minister Fahmi and War Minister Gamasy to Moscow last December. Such a delivery will help Gromyko parry any Egyptian demand for new agreements under which Moscow would replace Egypt's war losses and modernize its arms inventory. It could also serve to hold out the promise of larger deliveries to come and take some of the play away from the arms deal President Sadat recently announced with the French.

* * *

Cambodian Communists yesterday successfully used mines to sink two tugs and heavily damage another in a Mekong River convoy returning to South Vietnam from Phnom Penh.

The next upriver convoy was scheduled to leave South Vietnam today, but it will probably be delayed until military commanders decide what to do about the mines. The Cambodian navy has some mine-sweeping equipment but little practice in using it. In addition, preliminary reports indicate that the mines encountered yesterday were detonated from the shore. These mines cannot be handled by normal mine-sweeping techniques.

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Cambodian insurgents in the area of Phonm Penh have received a heavy increase in supplies from the northeastern part of the country--the entry point for North Vietnamese and Chinese arms deliveries.

Intercepted communications since the beginning of the year indicate that at least six convoys totaling more than 300 vehicles left the northeast. Two of these convoys carried over 20,000 recoilless rifle rounds, more than 6,500 mortar rounds, and over 4,000 Chinese 107-mm. rockets--one of the largest such shipments ever detected. Khmer Communist "defense minister" Khieu Samphan last spring signed an apparently open-ended military assistance agreement with Peking. The insurgents also have an agreement with Hanoi to exchange rice for materiel.

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